

FORWARD

THE PETALUMA CHICKEN HOUSE PROJECT:

Interviews, Memoirs and Oral Histories

Accounts from those whose livelihood derived from the poultry industry

Collected by Maxine Kortum Durney and others

for the Petaluma Museum Association

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DURNEY  
Chicken House  
Project



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Lucy Dean Kortum  
Historical Research Committee  
September 25, 2020







Strathmore  
PURE COTTON



## FORWARD

In 1988 Thea Snyder Lowry brought together a small group as a special committee of the Petaluma Museum Association to discuss her idea for a book of photographs, with accompanying text. Under the working title of "The Chicken House Project," the book would preserve images of the decaying, lichen-covered structures which still identify the numerous small chicken ranches that covered the rolling hills surrounding Petaluma.

As their contribution several of the group elected to record the memories of people who had experienced various aspects of the industry, from work on ranches and auxiliary enterprises, to collecting eggs after school. In addition to conducting personal interviews, the group received contributions of memoirs and letters documenting a time of challenge and reward, despair and disillusionment, hard work and fun.

In 1993 some of those interviews and memoirs were condensed and edited by Ms. Lowry and published as Petaluma Poultry Pioneers. Ms. Lowry's own book that evolved from the 1988 Chicken House Project is expected to appear in bookstores this Fall. Now titled Empty Shells, it is an in depth study of Petaluma's poultry history through the years.

A third outcome of the Chicken House Project is now at hand to further enrich our understanding of the history of Petaluma: this volume contains the full text of the interviews, memoirs, letters, and oral histories brought together by Maxine Kortum Durney and colleagues. The Petaluma Museum is grateful to them and to the Petaluma pioneers who generously shared their stories for the benefit of future researchers as well as for family, friends, and all who remember Petaluma as the "the world's egg basket."

Lucy Deam Kortum  
Historical Research Committee  
September 15, 2000



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Lacy Dean Kortum  
Historical Research Committee  
September 15, 2000



*Notes: Most of the stories are by people who lived in Petaluma or its environs.  
Other story-tellers are*

*Catala, in accounts by Randa Bunker and Martha Taylor Widdell*

*David, in accounts by Randa Bunker and Martha Taylor Widdell*

*Petaluma, in accounts by Randa Bunker and Martha Taylor Widdell*

*Todd Bunker, in accounts by Randa Bunker and Martha Taylor Widdell*

## PREFACE

As I composed a table of contents for this collection I experienced again my affection for these stories. Most of them are from my time or my parents' time in Petaluma; many of the story tellers are my friends or became my friends during the interview process.

Interviewers beside myself whose work appears in this collection are Marilyn Bragdon, who interviewed Ben Burmester; Renee Marson de Vences, who interviewed her grandfather, David Marson; Miriam Hutchins, who interviewed Jack Haberer; Sheryl Jern, who interviewed Anna Keyes Neilsen; Steve Jones, who interviewed Randy Bureker; Lucy Kortum, who interviewed Hideo and Sawame Shimizu; Thea Lowry, who interviewed Herbert Bundesen, and Althea Larsen Torliatt, who interviewed Marlene Masada. My thanks to them all.

Maxine Kortum Durney  
September 17, 2000



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Interviewers beside myself whose work appears in this collection are Marilyn Hagdon, who interviewed Ben Bunnester; Renee Mason de Vence, who interviewed her grandfather, David Mason; Marion Hinkins, who interviewed Jack Hahner; Sheryl Jent, who interviewed Anna Keyes Nelson; Steve Jones, who interviewed Randy Bursack; Lucy Kortum, who interviewed Hideo and Sawane Shimizu; Tess Lowry, who interviewed Herbert Bunnester, and Alissa Larsen Toftall, who interviewed Alanae Masada. My thanks to them all.

Maxine Kortum Durney

September 17, 2000



**Note: Most of the stories are by people who lived in Petaluma or its environs.  
Other nearby places are**

**Cotati, in accounts by Randy Bureker and Martha Focht Wohletz**

**Hessel, in Raymond Travers Gere account**

**Penngrove, in accounts by Jack Haberer, Mary Kai Nakagawa, and Hideo and  
Sawame Shimizu**

**Todd Road, in David Marson's account**

**and**

**Two Rock, in Martin Mickelson's account**



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Sawano Shimizu

Todd Road, in David Marson's account

and

Two Rock, in Martin Michelson's account



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**Bihn, William A.** "The Bihn Family Hatcheries, a Tape Recorded Memoir". Bihn brothers arrive from Ohio, start hatchery on Bodega Avenue, with help of loan from G. P. McNear. Incubators, the first built on premises, to be followed by Petersime, Robbins, Smith, and Bundy incubators. Sexing of baby chicks, mink farms buy the cockerels.

**Boivin, Sherman.** Letter to M.K.D. Working for Rex Hardware, while still in high school in mid thirties. Driving a truck for Stewart and Murray. Employment in Frasier Box Factory and the Burrows Company. Schooners like the Napoma unload clear spruce boards on the banks of Petaluma River.

**Brinley, Laurette Suez.** Her mother, Odette Cayla, from France. Great grandfather, from the Azores, alters name from Coehlo to King. Suez (originally Soares, or S uares) from Portugal. Five acres purchased on corner of Lohrman Lane and Horn Avenue.

**Bundesen, Herbert.** "Hatcheryman of the 1950's". A German family raises chickens on Lohrman Lane. Herbert returns from Cal Poly in 1948 to establish with his brother Paul a hatchery business, breeding for meat birds. They purchase Petaluma Hatchery first, then later Petaluma Cooperative Hatchery. The chicken business undergoes a metamorphosis. As told to Thea Lowry and Maxine Durney.

**Bunyan, Vanette Ott.** "The Cat Cemetery and the Man Who Brought Chopped Meat for the Chickens". Her people come from Michigan, Indiana, and Holland: the Smiths, Jewetts and Otts. The family's tannery burns to the ground on the day of the earthquake. The move in 1916 to the Zeh ranch on Gossage Avenue. Vanette studies under Milo Baker at Santa Rosa Junior College. Her sister marries Melvin "Dutch" Flohr. As told to M.K.D.

**Bureker, Randy .** In 1929 an Iowa farm family drives to California, fifteen miles per hour. Two years later at age 21 Randy returns from

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Anonymous. Memories of working at Foster's Products, as told to Maxine Korman Boney. Beginning in 1938, keeping track of bulk deliveries of grain by rail and truck; later the pricing and payroll departments. City Council of Peabody refuses Foster's Products their request for better water service and capacity.

Bills, William A. "The Hills Family Hatcheries, a Tape Recorded Memoir". Hills brothers arrive from Ohio, start hatchery on Hedge Avenue, with help of loan from G. F. McWaters. Incubators, the first built on premises, to be followed by Peterman, Robbins, Smith, and Handy incubators. Selling of baby chicks, milk farms buy the chickens.

Bovine, Sherman. Letter to M.E.D. Working for Rex Hardware, while still in high school in mid thirties. Buying a truck for Stewart and Murray. Employment in Foster Box Factory and the Boney Company. Sentences like the Boney's refused their space boards on the banks of Peabody River.

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Bonhosen, Herbert. "Hatcheryman of the 1930's". A German family raises chickens on Johnson Lane. Herbert returns from Cal Poly in 1948 to establish with his brother Paul a hatchery business, breeding for meat birds. They purchase Peabody Hatchery first, then later Peabody Cooperative Hatchery. The chicken business undergoes a metamorphosis. As told to Thom Lowry and Maxine Boney.

Buysan, Vannie Ott. "The Cat Cemetery and the Man Who Brought Chopped Meat for the Chicken". Her people come from Michigan, Indiana, and Holland; the Smiths, Lowrys and Ott. The family's tannery burns to the ground on the day of the earthquake. The move in 1916 to the Red ranch on George Avenue. Vannie studies under Mills Baker at Santa Rosa Junior College. Her sister marries Edwin "Dutch" Fisher. As told to M.E.D.

Bowker, Randy. In 1929 an Iowa farm family drives to California, fifteen miles per hour. Two years later at age 21 Randy returns from



Iowa to work on Wilsey Bennett's White Leghorn Farm on Jewett Road. Feed mixes, diseases, vaccination of birds.. Marries Frances Kelly who teaches at Liberty School. Establishes home on Gravenstein Highway. Work for Taylor Milling Co., Consumer Feed Store, Globe Mills, and McNear's. World War II: Basalt Shipyard, Napa; Marinship, Sausalito. Later: S. A. Peterson, well drilling and pumps. As told to Steve Jones.

Burmester, Ben. "Boyhood On A Chicken Ranch on Western Avenue". A three generation German family on 18 acres purchased in 1900. His father meets his mother, Amalie Benedetti at the Lutheran Church. Daily routines: milking, feeding chickens and gathering eggs. A 4H project building a brooding house to raise 500 pullets. University of California at Davis and Berkeley, eventually head of chicken disease department at USDA lab in Michigan. As told to Marilyn Bragdon.

Carlson, Heimer. "Chick sexer for 55 years". Son of a Swedish carpenter, who was the contractor for the building of Lowell High School in San Francisco, and who established a chicken ranch on Highway 101 (now 4685 Petaluma Blvd. North) in 1920. In 1935 changed to supplying turkey eggs to Poehlman Hatchery, and retailed dressed and live birds on the ranch. Heimer's high school ag teacher recommends him for training as a chick sexer. Marriage to Jean Dye. "Chick sexing": History of chick sexing, sponsoring hatcheries in Petaluma, numbers and names, how they were paid.

Donovan, Lavelle Roderick. "Memories of the Roderick Ranch on Magnolia Avenue". 10 acres 1917 to 1935. Preparation of the brooder house for the baby chicks; description of a "chicken coop". Feed: grains, kale and rape grown and harvested by her father; oyster shells. Medications from the Poultry Pharmacy. Celluloid rings to identify the birds. The alarm clock system of lighting the houses at night. Hunting rats. The pump and well system. Their private telephone line owned by Mr. Gugliametti.

Durney, Maxine Kortum. "Brooder Houses, Chicken Houses, Colony Houses, Coops". Descriptions. My father: a public relations man for Sperry Flour Co., wholesaler of grains to G. P. McNear. In 1928 he turns to being a hatcheryman, and eventually acquires a chicken ranch on Ely Road, on which he could keep a breeding flock and operate a hatchery. The hatchery is discontinued; eggs are produced for the market. My mother cleans eggs and listens to the soap operas. I am defeated by a "broody" hen.

Eatherton, Ruby Scott. "Kresten Krestensen Scott and Elise Andrea Olesen". In Denmark Kresten hears of Petaluma, comes here in 1905 at



lows to work on Wilsey Bennett's White Lagoon Farm on Jewett Road. Food mixer, diesel, vaccination of birds. Marries Frances Kelly who teaches at Liberty School. Establishes home on Greenstein Highway. Works for Taylor Milling Co., Consumers Food Store, Globe Mills, and McNair's. World War II: South Shipyard, Naval Machinery, Sanatulla. Later: S. A. Peterson, well drilling and pump. As told to Steve Jones.

Burmeister, Ben. "Bought On A Chicken Ranch on Western Avenue." A three generation German family on 18 acres purchased in 1900. His father meets his mother, Annie Burmeister at the Lutheran Church. Daily routine: milking, feeding chickens and gathering eggs. A 4H project building a breeding house to raise 500 pullets. University of California at Davis and Berkeley, eventually head of chicken disease department at USDA lab in Michigan. As told to Marilyn Bergman.

Carlton, Elmer. "Chick rearer for 25 years." - Son of a Swedish carpenter, who was the contractor for the building of Jewett High School in San Francisco and who established a chicken ranch on Highway 101 (now 4085 Petaluma Blvd. North) in 1930. In 1935 changed to supplying turkey eggs to Freshman Hatchery, and raised dressed and live birds on the ranch. Elmer's high school as teacher recommends him for training as a chick rearer. Marriage to Jean Dye. "Chick rearing": history of chick rearing, sponsoring hatcheries in Petaluma, numbers and names, how they were paid.

Bergman, Lavette Hatchery. "Memories of the Hatchery Ranch on Magnolia Avenue." 10 acres 1917 to 1935. Preparation of the brooder house for the baby chicks; description of a "chicken coop." Fresh grains, kale and rape grown and harvested by her father; eggster shells. Medications from the Petaluma Pharmacy. Collected eggs to identify the birds. The alarm clock system of lighting the houses at night. Hunting rats. The pump and well system. Their private telephone line owned by Mr. Gaglianetti.

Burkey, Martin Horton. "Brooder House, Chicken House, Colony House, Coop." Description. My father a public relations man for Sperry Flour Co., wholesaler of grain to G. B. McNair. In 1928 he turns to being a hatcheryman, and eventually acquires a chicken ranch on Jewett Road, on which he could keep a breeding flock and operate a hatchery. The hatchery is discontinued; eggs are produced for the market. My mother cleans eggs and hatches in the coop again. I am debater by a "broody" hen.

Eastman, Ruby Scott. "Kristen Kristensen Scott and Eric Anders Olsen." In Denmark Kristen heart of Petaluma, comes here in 1905 at



age 19, to work for his sponsor, a Dane near Pt. Reyes. Married in 1916 to Elise, they rent a ranch on the upper Lynch Road; later, with two children, move to chicken ranch on Bodega Avenue. Ruby tells of a children's life on the farm: the dangerous kale cutter, the gopher catching cat, broody hens and hysterical hens, the "dead man", searching for whole shells in the oyster shells, and the sled ride.

Eatherton, Jack. His parents die before he is four, and he is raised on Kentucky Street by older sisters, one of whom worked as cashier at the California theater, the other as a bookkeeper and typist for Cochran Lumber, later married Henry Reynaud,. Jack and his brothers who were always hungry, catch squabs under the wharves. Memories of the scow schooners unloading shells, lumber and sacks of grain; and of the passenger steamers, the Gold and the Petaluma. The scene at Van Bebb's iron works. Catholic schooling included no Shakespeare. "The Cherry Street Massacre". A dray horse slips on the cobblestones. Later, working with Karl Kortum on his family's chicken ranch, and later yet as a Navy hospital aide in the South Pacific in World War II. As told to M.K.D.

Eldredge, Dora. "Corona Club". A women's club, established in 1903 by chicken farmer's wives, eventually receiving a donation of land on Corona Road from Chris and May Schlake, for a club house. Membership limited to fifty, then sixty members. As told to M. K. D.

Evans, Georgina Volkerts. "Comments on The Depression". Growing up on a farm on the outskirts of Petaluma on the highway, now known as Petaluma Blvd. North. Their father sells the cream from his twelve cows to the Petaluma Cooperative Creamery, and the milk to the chicken ranchers. The best of the potatoes they grow are sold to the grocery stores; the littlest potatoes are cooked up for the pigs. The children cut alfalfa to sell to people who are growing rabbits. They grow kale plants for the chicken ranchers to plant for their flocks. The whole family goes dancing. The town kids come out to swim in the creek. Her mother works at Sunset Line and Twine and her father works as a substitute mailman. The children, home alone, learn to provide food for the tramps, never to turn them away. Sad times during the Depression: the NRA and the pigs; people losing their ranches to the feed mills. Later, as a teenager: housework for others, working as an usherette at the California Theatre. Then steady work when she turns eighteen. Dating. From comments Georgina made at a program on the Depression, at the Petaluma Museum; and from a tape that she made for her family.

Faraone, Frank. His father came from Cicily, marries Ottillie Rogers Huff, born in Petaluma. They establish a business buying chickens and



age 12, to work for his sponsor, a Dane near Ft. Hayes. Married in 1916 to Elsie, they rent a ranch on the upper Lynch Road; later, with two children, move to chicken ranch on Dodge Avenue. Baby tells of a children's life on the farm: the dangerous kale cutter, the gopher eating cat, broody hens and hysterical hens, the "dead man", searching for whole shells in the oyster shells, and the sled ride.

Kathleen, Jack. His parents die before he is born, and he is raised on Kentucky Street by older sister, one of whom worked as cashier at the California Theater, the other as a bookkeeper and typist for Cochran. Another later married Henry Heywood. Jack and his brothers who were always hungry, catch sparrows under the wharves. Members of the new schoolers including shells, lumber and sacks of grain; and of the passenger steamer, the Gold and the Petaluma. The scene at Van Bohrer's iron works. Catholic schooling included no Shakespeare. "The Cherry Street Massacre". A day home after on the coast. Later, working with Ned Korman on his family's chicken ranch, and later yet as a Navy hospital aide in the South Pacific in World War II. As told to M.K.B.

Kidnapper, Doris. "Corona Club". A women's club, established in 1903 by chicken farmer's wife, eventually receiving a donation of land on Corona Road from Chris and Mary Schickel for a club house. Membership limited to fifty, then sixty members. As told to M. K. B.

Evans, Georgia Veltner. "Comments on The Depression". Growing up on a farm on the outskirts of Petaluma on the highway, now known as Petaluma Blvd. North. Their father sells the cream from his twelve cows to the Petaluma Cooperative Creamery, and the milk to the chicken rancher. The best of the potatoes they grow are sold to the grocery store; the blighted potatoes are cooked up for the pigs. The children cut alfalfa to sell to people who are growing rabbits. They grow kale plants for the chicken ranchers to plant for their flocks. The whole family goes dancing. The town kids come out to swim in the creek. Her mother works at Sunset Line and Twine and her father works as a substitute mailman. The children, home alone, learn to provide food for the tramp, never to turn them away. Bad times during the Depression: the NRA and the pigs; people taking their ranches to the feed mill. Later, as a teenager, housework for others, working as an amateur at the California Theater. Then steady work when she turns eighteen. Dating from comments Georgia made at a program on the Depression, at the Petaluma Museum; and from a tape that she made for her family.

Farnon, Frank. His father came from Cicely, married Otilie Rogers Huff, born in Petaluma. They establish a business buying chickens and



preparing them for the market. Description of the "dry pick", and the sale of the bird, its feathers, and its blood. As told to M.K.D.

Filippini, Anna Wieling . Her parents come from Holland; rent a big dairy on Sonoma Mountain in the 1880's. They purchase thirty acres , in 1900, on Route 3, now known as Casa Grande, in locality known as New Town. Adobe soil produces three cuttings of alfalfa per year. Father builds porch clear around house so that children can skate in winter. Marriage to Henry Filippini in 1927. Description of raising baby chicks in brooder houses. Bliss and Payran schools. As told to M.K.D.

Fishman, Sol. His parents , married in 1913, are driven, as Jews, from Poland. In Petaluma they purchase five acres on Chapman Lane, establish a chicken ranch, and survive foreclosure , by Golden Eagle Milling Co. They were the first in the county to go into meat birds, Rhode Island Reds. On Saturdays the Sol and his brothers between chores, went to the football game. As told to M.K.D.

Fraser, Betty Larsen. Her parents, Hans Larsen and Betty Lund, both from Denmark, are married in 1913, come to Petaluma on the Steamer Gold, to establish a partnership with George Knudsen, on Marshall Lane. Betty attends Cinnabar School, comes home in afternoon to work in her garden, gather eggs, and do homework. Memories of rats and the conversion of the old sedan into a little truck. As told to M. K. D.

Fratini, Ed. "In the morning, {in East Petaluma}you could hear the cackling, the wave of sound coming toward you." Independent telephone companies, the Western Refrigerator Company, the realto D.E. Bachelor, poultry buying stations: Agius, Drees, Dodge Sweeney and Co; veal calves taken to the slaughter houses. A horse hitched to a capstan to draw water from a well; McNear's horse drawn delivery system; horses drawing tank wagons. McNear brings trucks from France. Scow schooners, freight cars, the Petaluma and Santa Rosa electric railroad. Gardens maintained at the R.R. depot. Ed works as a teller at the bank.As told to M.K.D.

Gere, Raymond Travers. "Diary Entries of a Hessel Rancher". 1923. A hopeful and excited and hard working young graduate of poultry husbandry courses at U. C. Davis establishes his own flock on six acres six miles south of Sebastopol. Marriage to Janie Simpson. Memories of Mildred Weir Gere Davis.

Goldstein, Charlotte Silver. Her father, Nathan Silver, flees Russia for New York, with his wife Ali. Chasrlotte is born on Ellis Island. They join his sister Buta Kushnir in Cotati. Buta is learning the chicken business



preparing them for the market. Description of the "dry pick", and the sale of the bird, its feathers, and its blood. As told to M.K.D.

Filipino, Anna Whiting. Her parents come from Holland; rent a big dairy on Sonoma Mountain in the 1880's. They purchase thirty acres in 1900, on Route 3, now known as Casa Grande, in locality known as New Town. Adobe soil produces three cuttings of alfalfa per year. Father builds porch clear around house so that children can skate in winter. Marriage to Henry Whiting in 1917. Description of raising baby chicks in brooder house. Bites and Poyan schools. As told to M.K.D.

Fishman, Sol. His parents, married in 1913, are driven, as Jews, from Poland. In Petaluma they purchase five acres on Chapman Lane, establish a chicken ranch, and survive foreclosure, by Golden Eagle Milling Co. They were the first in the county to go into meat birds. Rhode Island Reds. On Saturdays the Sol and his brothers between others, went to the football game. As told to M.K.D.

Foster, Betty Larsen. Her parents, Hans Larsen and Betty Lund, both from Denmark, are married in 1913, come to Petaluma on the Steamer Gold, to establish a partnership with George Knudsen, on Marshall Lane. Betty attends Chamber School, comes home in afternoon to work in her garden, gather eggs, and do housework. Member of 4-H and the conversion of the old school into a little truck. As told to M. K. D.

Frost, Ed. "In the morning, [the East Petaluma] you could hear the cackling, the wailing, the wailing coming toward you." Independent telephone companies, the Western Refrigerator Company, the route D.E. Backer, poultry, buying station: Agate, Dyer, Dodge, Swenson and Co; real calves taken to the slaughter house. A horse hitched to a capstan to draw water from a well; McNear's horse drawn delivery system; horses drawing tank wagons. McNear brings trucks from France. Snow schooner, freight cars, the Petaluma and Santa Rosa electric railroad. Gardens maintained at the R.R. depot. Ed works as a teller at the bank. As told to M.K.D.

Gore, Raymond Traver. "Bible Entries of a Herd Rancher." 1923. A hopeful and excited and hard working young graduate of poultry husbandry comes to E. C. Davis established his own flock on six acres six miles south of Sebastopol. Marriage to Jane Simpson. Member of Milled Wotr Gore Davis.

Goldstein, Charlotte Silver. Her father, Nathan Silver, goes Russia for New York, with his wife AB. Charlotte is born on Ellis Island. They join his sister Bats Keshin in Cotati. Bats is learning the chicken business



in order to teach it at a kibbutz in Palestine. Silvers settle on five acres on Woodward Ave. in Penngrove in 1928 or '29. They lose their flock to foreclosure, but there was no resentment. "You must remember where they came from, all that they had been through". As told to M.K.D.

Haberer, Jack. How his parents came to Willow Avenue, where he still lives; walking to school in Penngrove; swimming in Willow Creek; Poultry Producers, and a prune packing business in down town Penngrove, in its heyday; out of work family men living as hobos under the trestle. As told to Miriam Hutchins.

Harrigan, Anna Hansen. "The Danes Are Famous for Colonizing". Uncle Martin Iverson came first, from Holsted, Denmark, followed by Anna's parents, uncles and cousins, with places close to each other on McDowell and Corona. Night time activities: moving the chickens to a new house, keeping the baby chicks from crowding, watching them for cannibalism, extermination of rats and sparrows. Examining the birds by the "Hogan System", described by Walter Hogan in "Call of the Hen". Losing the place to G.P. McNear. As told to M.K.D.

Hobbie, George. "Rex Mercantile Company". Started in 1907 by Herbert Sweed, Park Van Bebber, and Ernest Hobbie, whose wife was Hanna Lohrmann. Rex served the chicken farmers, while Tomasini Hardware served the dairy farmers, and stayed afloat during the Depression. Rex nearly went under as the chicken industry floundered. Al Behrens of Bank of America extended credit, but Rex had to cut its payroll by half. As told during the program on The Great Depression at the Petaluma Museum July 16, 1990; and to M.K.D.

Keehn, Hilda Tiemann. "Way Back When". Also, "Farming in the Liberty District", and "Candling at the Poultry Producers" as told to M.K.D. Travel by horse and wagon, at five miles per hour, to deliver eggs to Poultry Producers, admiring the homes of J.J. King and the Earlys, and fording a tidal inlet at high tide on north Main Street. Picking up grain at Golden Eagle Milling Co., purchasing supplies at Schluckebier Hardware, visiting the bakery, the butcher and the grocery store. Their ranch was near the Liberty Station. The 3Pm electric train alerted their chickens. At age 14 Hilda began work as a candler at the Poultry Producers. The effect of the Crash, and then the NRA on wages; coming of the five day week and coffee breaks. Her sister, Rose Tiemann Langdon, champion egg handler of the world.

Kelsey, Emily Hecla. Her grandfather and grandmother, Elisha Light and Emily Fraser of New York came west, established a hotel in Placerville, later one in Petaluma; then a dairy on Pierce's Point;



in order to teach it at a kibbutz in Palestine. Silver settles on five acres on Woodland Ave. in Farmgrove in 1928 or '29. They lose their flock to foot-and-mouth, but there was no treatment. "You must remember where they came from, all that they had been through." As told to M.K.B.

Haber, Jack. How his parents came to Willow Avenue, where he still lives; willing to school in Farmgrove; swimming in Willow Creek; Pottery Producers; and a private packing business in down town Farmgrove; in its heyday; out of work family men living at Haber under the roof. As told to Miriam Hershman.

Hartigan, Anna Hansen. "The Hansen Air Farm for Colonizing." Uncle Martin Iverson came first, from Helsing, Denmark, followed by Anna's parents, uncles and cousins, with places close to each other on McPherson and Cornish. Night time activities: moving the chickens to a new house, keeping the baby chicks from crowding, watching them for cannibalism, extermination of rats and sparrows. Examining the birds by the "Hogan System", described by Walter Hogan in "Call of the Hen". Lending the place to C.P. McVern. As told to M.K.B.

Hobbs, George. "Rex Macintosh Company." Started in 1907 by Herbert Swand, Park Van Hobbs, and Ernest Hobbs, whose wife was Hanna Lohmann. Rex served the chicken farmers, while Tommasini Hardware served the dairy farmers, and stayed afloat during the Depression. Rex nearly went under as the chicken industry floundered. Al Roberts of Bank of America extended credit, but Rex had to cut its payroll by half. As told during the program on The Great Depression at the Petaluma Museum July 16, 1990; and to M.K.B.

Kitch, Hilda Thomas. "Way Back When." Also, "Farming in the Liberty District," and "Canning at the Pottery Producers" as told to M.K.B. Travel by horse and wagon, at five miles per hour, to deliver eggs to Pottery Producers, delivering the boxes of J.L. King and the family, and finding a tidal inlet at high tide on north Main Street. Picking up grain at Golden Eagle Milling Co., purchasing supplies at Schneider Hardware, visiting the bakery, the butcher and the grocery store. Their ranch was near the Liberty Station. The 37th electric train started their chicken. At age 14 Hilda began work as a canner at the Pottery Producers. The effect of the Crash, and then the NRA on wages; coming of the five day week and coffee breaks. Her sister, Rose Thomas Langdon, champion egg handler of the world.

Kibbey, Emily Heck. Her grandmother and grandmother, Ethel Light and Emily Foster of New York came west, established a hotel in Petaluma, later one in Petaluma; then a dairy on Pierce's Point;



followed by management of the "Petaluma House" in Petaluma, then a dairy in Chileno Valley. Their son Elisha marries Elizabeth Schlake, daughter of Henry Schlake and Elizabeth Rabe of Germany. Henry and Elizabeth established a dairy on the Burdell Ranch; in 1880 purchased 80 acres that now contains a portion of the Petaluma airport. Before turn of the century Emily's father purchased 40 acres on Ely Road. Emily and her sister attend Payran school, and Sunday School at Waugh School. Emily graduates from Payran, attends business courses at the convent, graduates in 1909. Works at Camm and Hedges and eventually for Lyman Byce. In 1915 Emily marries Edwin Kelsey, whose family had holdings on Old Adobe Road. Her husband plants walnuts, and grows wheat and oats, and to give the land a rest, a volunteer crop of oats and clover. Notes on Payran school, its teachers, including Ida Denman, who became the second Mrs. McNear.

King, Helen F. and Prue King Draper. "1400 I Street Extension" and "Another Perspective:". In 1946 the Ted and Helen King family purchase a chicken ranch. Helen gives a vivid description of the vaccination routine on a Saturday; and her daughter Prue gives a vivid description of how distasteful life among the chickens was for her, a teenager. Also historical notes from Prue's brother, Thomas F. King.

Kortum, Karl. "A Little Chicken Farm in Petaluma" The dream of many a seaman, and the reality. Conversations in 1966 with Captain Klebingat and in 1962 with seaman Icy Helgason.

Lichau, Gretchen Stonitsch. "Five Acres on Skillman Lane". Her father, an Austrian, and her mother from the Isle of Fohr establish a chicken ranch in 1922 in Petaluma so that her mother, who was born Ada Josina Andresen, could be near her four sisters. Gretchen's father worked in San Francisco, came home on weekends; but eventually found work in Petaluma, and then started a sack business. Gretchen repaired sacks, for a cent apiece. As told to M.K.D.

Mariola, Alta Johnson. "In the Office at Poultry Producers". Emma Landgran and John Malcolm Johnson both from Sweden, met in Denver, married, arrived in Petaluma with 75cents between them. They establish a chicken ranch in 1905 on McDowell Rd. near Corona. Foreclosed by their feed company, G. P. McNear, in 1928, Mr. McNear gives Alta's mother \$500 toward a home in town. Alta learned to candle eggs at Nye and Nissen, went to work in 1937 at Poultry Producers, first candling then in the office to figure egg tags, and later in egg sales. She recounts the strike, joining the union, and the move of the candling operation to San Leandro. Alta worked for Poultry Producers 39 years, longer than anyone except John Klemenok. As told to M.K.D.



followed by management of the "Peterson House" in Petaluma, then a dairy in Colusa Valley. Their son Edwin marries Elizabeth Schick, daughter of Henry Schick and Elizabeth Kabe of Germany. Henry and Elizabeth established a dairy on the Bonelli Ranch; in 1880 purchased 50 acres that now contains a portion of the Petaluma airport. Before town of the century Emily's father purchased 40 acres on Elj Road. Emily and her sister attend Payson school, and Sunday School at Wagon School. Emily graduates from Payson, attends business courses at the convent, graduates in 1902. Works at Caman and Hodges and eventually for Lyman Dyer. In 1912 Emily marries Edwin Kelsey, whose family had holdings on Old Adobe Road. Her husband plants wheat, and grows wheat and oats, and to give the land a rest, volunteer crop of oats and clover. Notes on Payson school, its teachers, including the Deacons, who became the second Mrs. McKean.

King, Helen E. and Faye King Dwyer. "14001 Street Extension" and "Another Perspective". In 1946 the Ted and Helen King family purchase a chicken ranch. Helen gives a vivid description of the vacation routine on a Saturday and her daughter Faye gives a vivid description of how distant life among the chickens was for her, a teenager. Also historical notes from Faye's brother, Thomas E. King.

Kortum, Karl. "A Little Chicken Farm in Petaluma." The dream of many a woman, and the reality. Conversations in 1966 with Captain Kibbigat and in 1961 with woman Icy Bergman.

Lichten, Gretchen Steinbach. "Five Acres on Stillman Lane." Her father, an Austrian, and her mother from the Isle of Forth establish a chicken ranch in 1911 in Petaluma so that her mother, who was born Ada Jensen Andersen, could be near her four sisters. Gretchen's father worked in San Francisco, came home on weekends; but eventually found work in Petaluma, and then started a sock business. Gretchen repaired socks, for a cent apiece. As told to M.K.D.

Merkle, Alta Johnson. "In the Office at Poultry Producers." Emma Landgren and John Merkle Johnson both from Sweden, met in Denver, married, arrived in Petaluma with 75 cents between them. They establish a chicken ranch in 1908 on McDowell Rd. near Corona. Forwarded by their feed company, G. E. McKean, in 1928. Mr. McKean gives Alta's mother \$200 toward a home in town. Alta learned to candle eggs at Pyle and Nissen, went to work in 1937 at Poultry Producers, first candling then in the office to figure egg tags, and later in egg sales. She recounts the strike, joining the union, and the move of the candling operation to San Leandro. Alta worked for Poultry Producers 39 years, longer than anyone except John Klemm. As told to M.K.D.



Marson, David. "Conversations with Nono, March 1988, 4723 Todd Road, Sebastopol, California". A transcription from a video. Nono is nearly 100 years old, and talks of Italy where there was no work; immigration in 1917 to Canada, Oregon, then to San Francisco, working at odd jobs to save the money to bring his bride from Italy. Chicken ranches first on Piner Road, than on Todd Road. Best year? 1929. As told to his granddaughter, Renee Marson De Vences.

Masada, Marlene Miyano. Born in Pennngrove in 1920, she moved with her parents to a ranch on Skillman Lane. Her parents, as aliens, couldn't own land, but could establish their business under the name Nakano Farms. Her mother attends the baby chicks, and Marlene does the cooking and the dishes, standing on an apple box to reach the stove. Wilson School. Trading sushi at lunchtime for Althea's pot roast sandwich. During World War II her father is removed from the family, but eventually is able to join them in relocation in Colorado. Four years in the relocation camp, where her mother dies. As told to Althea Larsen Torliatt.

McDaniel, Ida A. "In and Around Petaluma, 1900 to 1981". The Henry Graff family of Minnesota purchase 20 acres on Corona Road. Ida notes families the length of Corona Road, both sides, and some on Ely Road. Her parents experiment with early incubators, and the children rise at 4.A.M. to turn the eggs by hand. Her father goes into business with A.R. Coulsen to produce a well-balanced mash for the growing chicken industry. Ida remembers the eathquake, Waugh School, the Hill Opera House, , and Kenilworth Park where she could ride her race horse. A memoir written in 1988, and submitted by her nephew Herb Graff.

Mickelson, Martin. "Two Rock". Martin came from Wisconsin in 1921 when he was twenty. Brooder houses for the baby chicks were heated with coal at that time, and Martin describes unloading the coal at Two Rock Commercial where he was employed. Everyone around Two Rock raised birds whose eggs were sold to the hatcheries. The hatcheries wanted eggs from free range chickens. Martin describes the use of colony houses, and the building of colony houses, a community event. He describes cooking food for the chickens, made up of horse meat, herring from Tomales Bay, and cull potatoes. He describes the "certifying" process for seed potatoes, the main crop in the Two Rock area. He started building larger houses in 1940, and changed with the industry, eventually supplying pullets to the ranches who were raising laying hens in cages. As told to Maxine Durney.



Manion, David. "Conversations with Nona, March 1988, 4733 Todd Head, Sebastopol, California." A transcription from a video. Nona is nearly 100 years old, and talks of Irish where there was no work; immigration in 1917 to Canada, Oregon, then to San Francisco, working at odd jobs to save the money to bring his wife from Irish. Children reached first on First Head, then on Todd Head. Best year? 1933. As told to his granddaughter, Nona Manion De Voe.

Melander, Marlene Mjysen. Born in Pungrove in 1910, she moved with her parents to a ranch on Melander Lane. Her parents, as always couldn't own land, but could establish their business under the name Melander Farm. Her mother attended the baby chicks, and Marlene does the cooking and the dishes, standing on an apple box to reach the stove. Wilson School. Trading such at lunchtime for Alice's pot roast sandwich. During World War II her father is removed from the family, but eventually is able to join them in relocation in Colorado. Four years in the relocation camp, where her mother died. As told to Alice Larson. Todd.

McDaniel, Ida A. "In and Around Pungrove, 1900 to 1981." The Henry Craft family of Minnesota purchase 30 acres on Carous Head. Ida notes families the length of Carous Head, both sides, and some on Elly Head. Her parents experiment with early incubators, and the children rise at 4 A.M. to turn the eggs by hand. Her father goes into business with A.R. Condon to produce a well-balanced mash for the growing chicken industry. He remembers the catparks, Wang School, the Hill Open House, and Kennelworth Park where she could ride her race horse. A memoir written in 1988, and submitted by her nephew Herb Craft.

Michelson, Martin. "Two Rock." Martin came from Wisconsin in 1911 when he was twenty. Brooder houses for the baby chicks were heated with coal at that time, and Martin describes unloading the coal at Two Rock Commercial where he was employed. Everyone around Two Rock raised birds whose eggs were sold to the hatcheries. The hatcheries wanted eggs from free range chickens. Martin describes the use of colony houses, and the holding of colony houses, a community event. He describes cooking food for the chickens, made up of horse manure, having from Tomatoes Bay, and call potatoes. He describes the "corrying" process for seed potatoes, the main crop in the Two Rock area. He started building larger houses in 1940, and changed with the industry, eventually supplying pullets to the ranches who were raising laying hens in cages. As told to Marlene Darcy.



Miller, Virginia Hansen. Her father, born in 1882 in Norway, went to sea when he was 17; eventually was a fireman for the city of Portland, and heard about the money that could be made on chicken ranching in Petaluma. He and Anna Marie, Virginia's mother, also of Norway, bought five acres on Skillman Lane. Virginia: "I cleaned eggs after school, too...changed into an old dress, no overalls for girls in those days." As told to M.K.D.

Nakagawa, Mary Kai. Her parents came to Sonoma County from Japan in 1918 to work in the hop fields and orchards. They were denied citizenship, but were able to buy property on Goodwin Ave. in the name of their daughters, who were minors, but also were citizens because they were born here. Mary recalls Eagle School in Pennngrove, high school in Petaluma, and the Japanese community center on Ely Road that was burned during the war. Sam Nisson, owner of Corona Feed Mill, was their mainstay, when they were removed to Granada, Colorado for the duration of the war. He got good prices for their chickens, a good renter for their home and for their chicken houses. From Mary's written account and conversation with M.K.D.

Neilsen, Anna Keyes. "Remembrances", also an interview with Sheryl Jern and a conversation with M.K.D. Growing up on a chicken ranch on Thompson Lane 1908 to 1918. Moving to town when her father, James Keyes, who has training as a pharmacist, recognizes the need for a pharmacy devoted to the diseases of chickens. High school, college, and marriage to Melvin Neilsen, M.D.

Peterson, Anna Figueira. Born in Hawaii, she is brought to Petaluma from Hawaii in 1923, when her father, a Portuguese diver, comes to California to be cured of "the bends". Anna went to work at Poultry Producers in 1926, while still in high school, which she completed with other working women on a part time basis. She recalls with pleasure incidents and fun working at Poultry Producers. As told to M. K. D.

Praetzel, Bertha King. "Chicken ranching, an account of early days on one of the first chicken ranches, the J. J. King Ranch at 3820 Bodega Avenue, West Petaluma; as remembered by the daughter of John J. King, Bertha King Praetzel." Brooder houses, chicken houses, horse meat and kale as part of the chickens' diet, and her father's success at the 1920-1921 Egg Laying Contest.

Shimizu, Hideo and Sawame. Memories of making a living in California by a Nisei couple. Her father as a grocer in Santa Rosa; work in the apple orchards and driers of Sebastopol; 12 acres of strawberries. An association with the utopian community at Fountain Grove. Years of



Miller, Virginia Hansen. Her father, born in 1883 in Norway, went to sea when he was 17; eventually was a fireman for the city of Portland, and heard about the money that could be made on chicken ranching in Petaluma. He and Anna Marie, Virginia's mother, also of Norway, bought five acres on Stillman Lane, Virginia. "I cleaned eggs after school, too...changed into an old dress, no earrings for girls in those days." As told to M.K.D.

Nakagawa, Mary Kai. Her parents came to Sonoma County from Japan in 1918 to work in the hop fields and orchards. They were denied citizenship, but were able to buy property on Goodwin Ave. in the name of their daughters, who were minors, but also were citizens because they were born here. Mary recalls Eagle School in Forest Grove, high school in Petaluma, and the Japanese community center on Ely Road that was burned during the war. Sam Nishan, owner of Corona Ford Mill, was their ancestor, when they were removed to Granada, Colorado for the duration of the war. He got good prices for their chickens, a good center for their home and for their chicken house. From Mary's written account and conversation with M.K.D.

Neilson, Anna Keyser. "Hochschule", also an interview with Sheryl Jans and a conversation with M.K.D. Growing up on a chicken ranch on Thompson Lane 1908 to 1918, moving to town when her father, James Keyser, who has training as a pharmacist, recognized the need for a pharmacy devoted to the doctors of Chinese high school, college, and marriage to Melvin Neilson, M.D.

Peterson, Anna Fjogstad. Born in Hawaii, she is brought to Petaluma from Hawaii in 1913, when her father, a Portuguese diver, comes to California to be cured of "the bends". Anna went to work at Fostory Products in 1916, while still in high school, which she completed with other working women on a part time basis. She recalls with pleasure incidents and fun working at Fostory Products. As told to M.K.D.

Pratt, Bertha King. "Chicken ranching, an account of early days on one of the first chicken ranches, the J. J. King Ranch at 3838 Boddy Avenue, West Petaluma; as remembered by the daughter of John J. King. Bertha King Pratt." Brother house, chicken house, basement and kafe as part of the chicken diet, and her father's success at the 1910-1911 Egg Laying Contest.

Scholar, Hilde and Samson. Memories of making a living in California by a kind couple. Her father as a grocer in Santa Rosa; work in the apple orchards and others of Sebastopol; 13 acres of strawberries. An association with the utopian community at Forest Grove. Years of



chicken ranching for the hardworking extended family . 1942 to 1946 in a relocation camp in Granada, Colorado. Shimuzus work on a potato farm in Girard, Pennsylvania. Driving to California end of the war they meet gratitude in Texas, because of the fame of Battalion 442, composed of Japanese Americans from the relocation camps. Resettling on their ranches in Penngrove, borrowing and paying off debts, children in school and in college; retirement in 1962. As told to Lucy Kortum.

Sobel, Margaret Forster. "The Forster Family in Petaluma". Invitations from Uncle David Forster to come to California bring the David Forster family from Northern Ireland to Sonoma County in 1922. They establish a chicken ranch on Grant Ave. San Antone School District children attend Petaluma district schools. Herbert Hoover's inaugural address on a radio at Lincoln Primary. Miss Matzenbaugh, Miss Entrekin, Mrs. Stewart, Mrs. Lepori. Arrival of the Forster piano on the Steamer Gold. First Presbyterian Church. Organization of the Orange Lodge. The move from chicken ranching to establishing an insurance agency. Other Irish families: the McClures and the McDowells.

Soernsen, Walter. Parents from Isle of Fohr. Grandfather Martin Bundesen one of the founders of the Mercantile Exchange, which became the Poultry Producers of Central California. On a Bodega Avenue chicken ranch Walter's father produced eggs that sold for a dollar a dozen in San Francisco, shipped on the Steamer Gold. As a sixteen year old Walter in 1927 drives Model T truck with a Ruxtle axle to San Francisco, delivering live birds. The market in San Francisco, the commission houses. During the Depression Walter is hired to pick up birds from ranchers who owed money to Hunt and Behrens. As told to M.K.D.

Sonksen, Emma Bransen. Parents from Denmark. Childhood on Stony Point Rd. and on Bodega Ave. near Bloomfield. Purchase of 72 acre chicken ranch on Wiegand Hill, where Emma recalls the nest arrangement for the laying hens, the spraying of the chicken houses for lice, the planting of potatoes and kale, her father trading potatoes for cases of canned food in the grocery stores. Indians arriving seasonally to dig potatoes. Commuting to Sweet's Business School in Santa Rosa. First job with Petaluma Poultry Producers. Effects of the N.R.A. The beginning of the end of the poultry industry. As told to M.K.D.

Stimson, Bob. Bloodtesting breeding flocks of roosters and hens, that were supplying eggs to the Poehlman Hatchery. Dusty dirty work that paid 75 cents an hour in 1943. Nighttime work in a Golden Eagle warehouse guarding against spontaneous combustion of wet warm used sacks. As told to M.K.D.



children teaching for the handwriting extended family - 1942 to 1946 in a  
relocation camp in Granada, Colorado. Shintans work on a potato farm  
in Grand, Pennsylvania. Driving to California and of the war they meet  
graduates in Texas, because of the name of Battalion 442, composed of  
Japanese Americans from the relocation camps. Resisting on their  
ranches in Fresno, borrowing and paying off debts, children in school  
and in college retirement in 1962. As told to Lucy Korten.

Sobel, Margaret Porter. "The Porter Family in Palestine". Invitations  
from Uncle David Porter to come to California being the David Porter  
family from Northern Ireland to Sonoma County in 1922. They establish  
a chicken ranch on Grant Ave. San Antonio School District children  
attend Palestine District school. Herbert Hoover's inaugural address on  
a radio at Lincoln University. Mrs. Mabel Hoover, Mrs. Fancher, Mrs.  
Stewart, Mrs. Loper. Arrival of the Porter family on the Steamer Gold.  
First Presbyterian Church. Organization of the Orange Lodge. The  
move from chicken teaching to establishing an insurance agency. Other  
first families: the McClure and the McDowell.

Sorenson, Walter. Parents from Isle of Fohr. Grandfather Martin  
Henderson one of the founders of the Hawaiian Exchange, which became  
the poultry producers of Central California. On a Bodog Avenue  
chicken ranch Walter's father produced eggs that sold for a dollar a  
dozen in San Francisco, shipped on the Steamer Gold. As a sixteen year  
old Walter in 1927 drives Model T truck with a Radio sets to San  
Francisco, delivering live birds. The market in San Francisco, the  
consignment boxes. During the Depression Walter is hired to pick up  
birds from ranchers who owed money to Hunt and Behner. As told to  
M.K.D.

Sorenson, Emma Brunner. Parents from Denmark. Childhood on Stony  
Point Rd. and on Bodog Ave. near Hoonah. Purchase of 75 acres  
chicken ranch on Wagon Hill, where Emma recalls the next  
arrangement for the laying hens, the spraying of the chicken houses for  
lice, the planting of potatoes and kale, her father trading potatoes for  
cases of canned food in the grocery store. Indians arriving seasonally to  
dig potatoes. Commenting to Sweet's Business School in Santa Rosa.  
First job with Fatherson Poultry Producers. Effects of the N.R.A. The  
beginning of the end of the poultry industry. As told to M.K.D.

Stinson, Bob. Bloodstock breeding books of roosters and hens, that  
were supplying eggs to the Fatherson Hatchery. Thirty fifty work that  
paid 75 cents an hour in 1942. Nighttime work in a Golden Eagle  
warehouse guarding against spontaneous combustion of wet warm used  
sacks. As told to M.K.D.



Talamantes, Tim. "Australorpes and Austrawhites; Honnegers and White Leghorns; Nick Chicks and Kimberchicks". Tim describes the different breeds. Tim works for his uncle, Otto Rotthaus, of Chapman Lane; later for Sales and Bourke, Hatchery. Preparing dead cockerels for the mink man. As told to M.K.D.

Thompson, Jan Day. Debeaking with electric hotplate. Sunday meals, always chicken. As told to M.K.D.

Torliatt, Althea Larsen. "Wilson Lane". Hired man, fox terrier dogs, the price of eggs at Christmas time and the doll in the pink dress. How her mother lost her citizenship. Wilson school. Larsen, Riewerts and Anderton families.

Vogel, Verna Hogberg. A Swedish girl comes to Novato from Minnesota, learns to candle eggs at Nye and Nissen, goes to work for Poultry Producers where she eventually becomes an inspector. How to candle eggs, what to look for as an inspector. Candler join the Amalgamated Meat Cutters' and Butcher's Workmen of North America. U.S.O. dances and marriage to Vernon Vogle, stationed at Two Rock As told to M.K.D.

Wohletz, Martha Focht. Ten acres of land on the Gravenstein Highway, in 1915. Her father delivers eggs three times a week by wagon to the railway station. Later he is a charter member of Poultry Producers of Cotati. The highway is rerouted through their chicken ranch. The family cleans the eggs, vaccinates the pullets, removes the non-layers, treats the baby chicks; but also enjoys excursions in their model T, reversing it to go up the steep hills.

Talbot, Tim. "Auntie's and Auntie's; Honeys and  
White Lagers; Nick Chick and Kink's Chick". Tim describes the  
different breeds. The work for his uncle, Otto Kallhaus, of Chapmans  
Lane; later for Sales and Bowers, Hatchery. Preparing dead chickens  
for the sink man. As told to M.K.D.

Thompson, Jan Ray. Dyeing with electric hotplate. Sunday meals,  
always chicken. As told to M.K.D.

Torbert, Albert Larson. "Wilson Lane". Hired man, for turkey dogs,  
the price of eggs at Christmas time and the doll in the pink dress. How  
her mother lost her citizenship. Wilson school, Larson, Riewerts and  
Anderson families.

Vogel, Vernon Hoberg. A Swedish girl comes to Nevada from Minnesota,  
learn to candle eggs at Nye and Nye, goes to work for Poultry  
Producers where she eventually becomes an inspector. How to candle  
eggs, what to look for as an inspector. Candler joins the Amalgamated  
Meat Canners' and Butcher's Workmen of North America, U.S.A.  
Larson and marriage to Vernon Vogel, stationed at Two Rock. As told to  
M.K.D.

Wolfe, Martha Foster. Ten acres of land on the Gravenstein Highway,  
in 1912. Her father's egg store then a week by wagon to the  
railway station. Later he is a charter member of Poultry Producers of  
Costa. The highway is renamed through their chicken ranch. The family  
clean the eggs, vaccinated the pullets, removes the non-layers, treats the  
baby chicks; but also enjoys excursions in their model T, reversing it to  
go up the steep hills.



ANONYMOUS

as told to Maxine Horton Durney, July 13, 1989

I began working for the Poultry Producers in 1938, after I had completed high school and business college.

My first job there? There would be a call from NWP (Northwestern Pacific RR Company) in the morning. We had to keep track of the railroad cars, their numbers, where they came from. They unloaded grain into the pit, alongside the track.

Trucks bringing grain had first to be weighed on the public scale. It was Smith's Scale and it is still there, on the corner of 2nd and C Streets. At harvest time the trucks held up traffic, trucks delivering feed, and trucks carrying hay, all had to be weighed. They backed up traffic clear down Petaluma Boulevard to the South and out to Copeland on the East. Drivers had to wait 24 hours sometimes for weighing.

Then trucks delivering to us had to be weighed again on our scales.

The whole thing was a complicated procedure. The mill was set up to handle bulk and to mix in bulk. There were big grain elevators. Later it became a push button system.

Chris Miller was the superintendent.

It was a good feeling, working there. We worked hard, we made no mistakes. It was a disgrace to make a mistake.

(Later, working in the pricing department.) When the grain prices changed, we got changes sometimes twice a day, from the grain exchange in Chicago. The quotations came to us by





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telephone from our headquarters in San Francisco, 840 Battery Street.

They had so many different feeds, for chicks, for laying hens, and later they were adding additives, like aureomycin. We used to buy all the feed ourselves and mix. Bran, milo, corn, wheat, shorts. Many tons of milo came up from the Delta, on barges. Wheat and corn came from the midwest, in railroad cars, 60 tons per car. A truck and trailer could carry 25 tons. Barges coming up the river had to wait for the tide. They carried 600 tons of grain, sometimes got stuck in the mud. They'd be pulled by tugs. Those tug captains knew what they were doing. When the Washington Street Bridge went up to let a tug and barge through, there was barely room side to side to let that barge through. I'd be walking up for lunch and would watch them. They had inches to spare. Then they'd wait for a tide to go back again.

Barges were unloaded by our conveyor belt. Augers on the barge brought the grain up from the hold on the barge.

In 1948, I began working on the payroll. It was a million dollar monthly payroll in Petaluma, and that figure does not include salaries paid executives, out of San Francisco.

In the fifties, Poultry Producers sent Larry Thompson to the City of Petaluma, to the City Council, to ask for better water service and greater water capacity. He was refused. He was a good man, and he felt insulted. The move to San Leandro followed.



Earlier, during the Depression years, Petaluma had the largest per capita income in the United States.

When, during the Roosevelt years, they were writing about how to start cooperatives, Poultry Producers was the model. There were ranchers in the co-op from Eureka to Turlock.